United Nations peacekeeping is a unique and dynamic instrument developed by the Organization as a way to help countries torn by conflict creates the conditions for lasting peace. The first UN peacekeeping mission was established in 1948, when the Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers to the Middle East to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Since then, there have been a total of 64 UN peacekeeping operations around the world.

The term "peacekeeping" is not found in the United Nations Charter and defies simple definition. Dag Hammarskjöld, the second UN Secretary-General, referred to it as belonging to "Chapter Six and a Half" of the Charter, placing it between traditional methods of resolving disputes peacefully, such as negotiation and mediation under Chapter VI, and more forceful action as authorized under Chapter VII.

Over the years, UN peacekeeping has evolved to meet the demands of different conflicts and a changing political landscape. Born at the time when the Cold War rivalries frequently paralyzed the Security Council, UN peacekeeping goals were primarily limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground, so that efforts could be made at the political level to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. Those missions consisted of military observers and lightly armed troops with monitoring, reporting and confidence-building roles in support of ceasefires and limited peace agreements.

With the end of the Cold War, the strategic context for UN peacekeeping dramatically changed, prompting the Organization to shift and expand its field operations from “traditional” missions involving strictly military tasks, to complex “multidimensional” enterprises designed to ensure the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements and assist in laying the foundations for sustainable peace. Today’s peacekeepers undertake a wide variety of complex tasks, from helping to build sustainable institutions of governance, to human rights monitoring, to security sector reform, to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

The nature of conflicts has also changed over the years. Originally developed as a means of dealing with inter-State conflict, UN peacekeeping has been increasingly applied to intra-State conflicts and civil wars. Although the military remain the backbone of most peacekeeping operations, the many faces of peacekeeping now include administrators and economists, police officers and legal experts, de-miners and electoral observers, human rights monitors and specialists in civil affairs and governance, humanitarian workers and experts in communications and public information.

UN peacekeeping continues to evolve, both conceptually and operationally, to meet new challenges and political realities. Faced with the rising demand for increasingly complex peace operations, the United Nations in the past few years has been overstretched and challenged as never before. The Organization has worked vigorously to strengthen its capacity to manage and sustain field operations and, thus, contribute to the most important function of the United Nations – maintaining international peace and security.

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/skins-1.5/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:UN_Soldiers_in_Eritrea.jpeg)

[UN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) Peacekeepers monitor the [Eritrea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eritrea)-[Ethiopia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia) border.

**Peacekeeping** is defined by the [United Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) as "unique and dynamic instruments developed by the Organization as a way to help countries torn by conflict create the conditions for lasting peace".[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacekeeping#cite_note-0) It is distinguished from both [peace building](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacebuilding) and [peacemaking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacemaking).

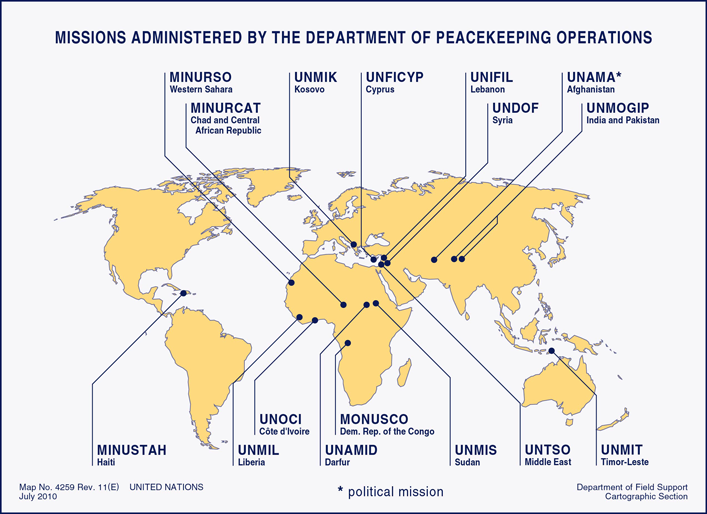
Peacekeepers monitor and observe [peace processes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_process) in post-conflict areas and assist ex-combatants in implementing the [peace agreements](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_agreement) they may have signed. Such assistance comes in many forms, including confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening the rule of law, and economic and social development. Accordingly UN peacekeepers (often referred to as **Blue Beret** because of their light blue [berets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beret) or helmets) can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel

**Nature of peacekeeping**

Peacekeeping is anything that contributes to the furthering of a peace process, once established. This includes, but is not limited to, the monitoring of withdrawal by combatants from a former conflict area, the supervision of elections, and the provision of reconstruction aid. Peacekeepers are often soldiers, but they do not have to be. Similarly, while soldier-peacekeepers are sometimes armed, they are not obligated to engage in combat.

Peacekeepers were not at first expected to ever fight. As a general rule, they were deployed when the ceasefire was in place and the parties to the conflict had given their consent. They were deployed to observe from the ground and report impartially on adherence to the ceasefire, troop withdrawal or other elements of the peace agreement. This gave time and breathing space for diplomatic efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict.

Thus, a distinction must be drawn between peacekeeping and other operations aimed at peace. A common misconception is that activities such as NATO's intervention in the [Kosovo War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_War) are peacekeeping operations, when they were, in reality, [peace enforcement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_enforcement). That is, since NATO was seeking to impose peace, rather than maintain peace, they were not peace*keepers*, rather peace*makers*

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:East_timor_independence_un2.jpg)

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:UN_Soldiers_in_Eritrea.jpeg)